

1999. I expect several of the latter bills to be enacted this year.

Tom also identified key funding shortfalls in NMFS and State of Mississippi programs for the Gulf of Mexico. His concern that Gulf of Mexico needs were being overlooked as NMFS funding was increased to address high-profile issues in other regions of the country led me to fight for additional funding for our region. The NMFS appropriation for Fiscal year 2001 includes an additional \$8.25 million for red snapper research and \$1 million to expand the NMFS Mississippi Laboratory at Pascagoula. I know he is pleased with that the State of Mississippi will receive much needed additional funding for coastal impact assistance, almost \$28 million in Fiscal Year 2001. This vital piece of the Conservation and Reinvestment Act was authorized and funded this year.

I wish Tom and his wife Janet all the best as they prepare for his next assignment within NMFS. I know that whatever he does, he will bring to it the same keen insight, practical solutions, and good humor that has served him so well in the past.

A MEMORIAL TO ELIZABETH KNIGHT BUNCH

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, we were all saddened to learn of the death of a long-time Senate employee and good friend, Ms. Betty Bunch. Betty died last week after a long struggle with a pulmonary infection.

Betty started working for the Senate on January 3, 1977, when she moved to Washington, DC, to be the office manager for Senator Malcolm Wallop, the Republican Senator from Wyoming. As a graduate of the University of Wyoming, Ms. Bunch worked for some years at the University before deciding to move East with the Senator.

After serving Senator Wallop for 10 years, Betty transferred to the Committee on Rules and Administration and worked for ranking member Senator TED STEVENS of Alaska. In July 1991, Betty moved to the Senate Sergeant at Arms office and worked on a number of projects for the Education and Support Services team of the Computer Center.

One of Betty's major projects was to assist with the final construction planning for the Sergeant at Arms' operations move to the Postal Square building. She was very involved in the relocation of the Senate's computer and communications center and staff, as well as the financial and procurement staffs. This was a major initiative, and Betty accomplished it with the utmost professionalism.

Betty continued on a number of special projects for the Sergeant at arms until her retirement in June 1999. In total, Betty served the Senate well for over 22 years.

We will all miss her loyalty, professionalism, integrity, and wonderful sense of humor. Her son Jamie and

daughter-in-law Glennis are in our thoughts and prayers.

VICTIMS OF GUN VIOLENCE

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, it has been more than a year since the Columbine tragedy, but still this Republican Congress refuses to act on sensible gun legislation.

Since Columbine, thousands of Americans have been killed by gunfire. Until we act, Democrats in the Senate will read the names of some of those who have lost their lives to gun violence in the past year, and we will continue to do so every day that the Senate is in session.

In the name of those who died, we will continue this fight. Following are the names of some of the people who were killed by gunfire one year ago today.

November 1, 1999:

Carlester Johnson, 17, Memphis, TN;
Rory Longs, 20, Chicago, IL;
Orlando Rangel, 23, Chicago, IL;
Patrice Thomas, 21, Houston, TX;
Donnell Tucker, Jr., 22, Baltimore, MD;

Adrian Miller, 43, Detroit, MI; and
John Ellis Wright, Jr., Fort Wayne, IN.

We cannot sit back and allow such senseless gun violence to continue. The deaths of these people are a reminder to all of us that we need to enact sensible gun legislation now.

HEALTH CARE FINANCING ADMINISTRATION

PAYMENTS FOR OUTPATIENT SERVICES

Mr. GRAMM. Mr. President, I am very concerned about how the Medicare program has chosen to pay the 10 free-standing cancer hospitals for outpatient services. It appears that the Health Care Financing Administration has ignored the explicit intent of the provisions we enacted last year as part of the Balanced Budget Refinement Act—provisions intended to help these critically important health care institutions.

Mr. ROTH. Senator, I share the Senator's concern. Last year, the Congress was concerned about how cancer hospitals would fare under the new Medicare outpatient prospective payment system. Cancer hospitals face many unique costs and the advent of exciting new treatments caused many to question the wisdom of applying the new outpatient prospective payment system to these facilities. To this end, the Finance Committee proposed and the Congress enacted provisions to protect these important facilities.

In brief, this provision created a permanent "hold harmless" for cancer hospitals. We instructed the Medicare program to pay cancer centers the same proportion of the facility's cost covered in 1996. In addition, we instructed the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services to

make interim payments to these facilities consistent with this hold harmless.

Mr. GRAMM. The Secretary has ignored our concerns and intent. The Secretary has allowed the Medicare program to withhold 15 to 20 percent of the interim payments owed to cancer facilities. The Medicare program will not pay cancer hospitals these withheld funds for up to 4 years.

Mr. ROTH. I investigated this issue with the Health Care Financing Administration, HCFA, to ensure that they are not proceeding in a way that disadvantages these facilities and protects access to important cancer services. It is my understanding that the Medicare fiscal intermediaries are keeping the interim payments to these facilities artificially low in order to avoid the risk of overpayments.

While I think it is appropriate to make interim payments to facilities as accurately as possible, paying these facilities as low as 80-85 percent of what HCFA estimates final costs to be seems too low. If in fact these reductions are lower than previous rates of reduction when a system transition has been implemented, then I strongly urge HCFA to immediately review their proposal to make upward adjustments in the payment rates. Also, I urge the Administration to give special attention to the expeditious handling of the initial cost reports from cancer hospitals as they are submitted over the next few months in order to determine what appropriate payment levels need to be.

Mr. GRAMM. I agree with the Senator. I believe that the Secretary's actions are counter productive and I strongly urge including language in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD that would make our intent clear.

Mr. ROTH. I, too, support restating within the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD our intent with regard to last year's Medicare bill.

LABOR-HHS-EDUCATION FUNDING BILL

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, in every area of public policy, we have to make choices and set priorities.

How much do we spend on defense? And how much do we spend on domestic priorities?

How much do we protect our forests and natural resources? How much do we allocate to health care, education, law enforcement, and other obvious priorities?

How heavy should the tax burden be? How much do we need to do to protect Medicare and Social Security for the future generations?

Often, we have to make difficult choices.

But when it comes to protecting workers from injuries in the modern workplace and increased investments in education, I say there is no choice. It's not one or the other. We must do both.

But I'm convinced that our Republican friends want to do neither.